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*The only UK magazine dedicated
to vintage coin-operated amusement machines*

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Published by: Antique Automatic Amusements
Editor: Jerry Chattenton

10 Bedford Road

Dartford DA1 1SR

07710 285360

e-mail jerry.mmm@tiscali.co.uk

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Editorial

Hello again, and here we are with Issue 60. Well, it's been a hectic few weeks since the last magazine and there's still plenty more to do, but I can at least confirm that once again we will be putting on a first class show on the 27th of this month. I am of course talking about the annual slotties' auction – read more on the following and centre pages. If you've ordered a catalogue, they should be ready to post by the time you read this. If you haven't, then do it now! This is the one day in the year that you won't want to miss.

Well, I'm keeping this brief, as I still have tons of work to do on the auction.

Hope to see you all on the 27th

All the best

Jerry

Front Cover picture: Steeple Chasers, an extremely rare German wall machine, one of the many fantastic lots entered in the Coventry auction.

Coventry '11

Well, we're just a couple of weeks away from 'the event of the year', and make no mistake, this is one day you cannot afford to miss. As usual, a big thank you to our regular vendors who, once again, have not let us down. Thanks and welcome also to those of you who have entered lots for the first time. We shall be presenting what I believe will prove to be our best event so far.....and we could not have done it without the vendors, so thanks again.

The auction is held at the Coundon social club, Coventry, which offers good amenities, including ample parking. Entrance is by catalogue, which by the time you read this, should be ready to post, so order yours now. Each catalogue will admit one person – if you're bringing someone with you, they will need to buy a ticket on the door, at £3 each. Please do not order tickets in advance. Doors will open at 10.30 am for viewing, so unless you are a vendor, do not arrive earlier as you will not be admitted. The auction will commence at about mid day, and please note that this is a cash only auction – no cards, cheques, promises, etc. Please also note that we will not be paying in or out until the end of the auction, so if you wish to go early, do not bid – there will be no exceptions.

I think we've got the message across by now, but for the benefit of newbies, there is to be no dealing outside of the auction. We certainly do not want to see unsold auction lots flogged off in the carpark afterwards. Jeremy and I put in an enormous amount of work to put these events together, and we do not believe that it is fair (and most of you agree) that a small minority should try to avoid paying a meagre 6% commission. If anyone attempts to sell you something outside of the auction, please let me know.

As usual, we will allow children to attend, but only by prior arrangement, and we will not admit small children, babies or toddlers. Please use your judgement as to whether this is the right place for your kids, as several hours can seem like days to a bored child. We haven't had any problems in the past, but we will not allow disruptive brats to spoil the enjoyment of others. If you intend to bring children, please call me on 07710 285360.

So, order your catalogue and we'll see you on the 27th.

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Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update November 2011

The urgent work to Dreamland's Grade II* listed cinema building has pretty much been under wraps, hidden behind scaffolding, but we will soon begin to see the results of the works to the main tower when Coombs (Canterbury) Ltd start to take down the scaffolding around the cinema's majestic 80ft high fin. The urgent work to the cinema building is necessary to prevent any further deterioration to the listed building. Over the next few weeks the removal of the scaffolding will gradually reveal Dreamland's fully restored vertical lettering in a sort of architectonic strip tease.

Dreamland's iconic signage was installed in the 1970s, and replaced the original 1930s sans serif neon lettering. The Prince's Regeneration Trust's Conservation Report identified a number of finishes and details as being degraded by neglect, later interventions or clumsy repairs.

Under Thanet District Council's urgent works notice it has been possible to restore the distinctive 1970s lighting scheme as a glowing invitation to the new Dreamland. The letters were removed and sent to a specialist company to be restored; this involved removing the yellow paint, polishing, re-wiring, painting the sides, replenishing the bulbs and on-ground testing. The letters are being remounted as the contractor's work progresses down the fin, with each letter being individually tested in situ.

In addition, TDC is investigating the costs of replacing the bulbs with LED lighting. At present the incandescent bulbs are wired in series of five, meaning that if one blows, five go out – producing a noticeable gap. LED lights would be connected in parallel, meaning that only one bulb at a time fails. Even more importantly, LED lights have a life of 100,000 hours (as opposed to 5,000 for a regular bulb), drastically reducing maintenance costs. They are also much more energy efficient, making them the environmentally-friendly choice. However, they are more expensive to install, so we await news from TDC.

We anticipate that some of the sign will be visible and tested in time for Christmas – watch this space!

In other news, we continue to work towards the public inquiry on the Compulsory Purchase Order in January next year. The Council's Compulsory Purchase Order has been challenged by Dreamland site owners, Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company Ltd., Margate Cinema Ltd and Margate Ride Ltd.

And the Heritage Lottery Fund will be visiting the Dreamland site this month ahead of their board meeting to consider our £3m Stage 2 HLF application. A decision will be made shortly after and, if successful, funds released once the CPO has been confirmed.

Nick Laister

Chairman, The Dreamland Trust

Jan Leandro (Audience Development Officer)

www.dreamlandmargate.com

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NEW RELEASE:

Thomas Ord: Circus Proprietor

by Stuart McMillan

Thomas Ord (1784-1859) was born the son of a minister who ran away and joined a circus. By around 1804 he had his own travelling circus. Although he built wooden circus buildings in Biggar, Dumfries, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Preston, Whitehaven, and Wick he was known by everyone in Scotland for his open-air shows. These shows he prepared by lifting the turfs of grass in a circle which were piled up around the diameter forming a circular bank of turfs. These were known as 'Ord's Rings' and could be seen all over Scotland in towns and villages; these rings were regarded as undisputed property which Thomas Ord returned to each year.

His circus was in the open air where people could watch his show and firework display for free, only those who chose to buy tickets for his lottery provided his livelihood. He attracted crowds of 8,000 people at a time; he brought colour and happiness into lives of three generations of people in a time of austerity and poverty.

He performed a theatrical show in the village hall in the evenings where a charge was made, and throughout his career he made and lost a lot of money.

Thomas Ord brought respectability into a profession that was rare in those days with his appearance at church on Sunday where it was an open secret that he would place a pound note in the collection plate. He banned drinking and swearing at his circus and he gave to the poor of each community he visited. He was loved by the people.

He performed standing on top of a horse at full speed right up until just before he died aged seventy five.

One of his daughters Selina married Edwin Pinder and after Thomas Ord died it became Ord Pinder circus. This was the start of the Pinder circus you can see performing in Britain. Ever since Thomas Ord died, a son in each generation of the Pinder family has been named Thomas Ord Pinder.

This limited edition book is the second in a series of books by Stuart McMillan, which looks at Scottish entertainment of the Victorian era.

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Bomb Dropper

By John Peterson

I am often struck by the dissimilarities between the gaming machines produced in the United States and those of Great Britain during the heyday of gambling, starting at the turn of the 20th century and continuing into the 1950's.

American gambling machines were like the Kardashian girls today. Good looking and rich, they didn't have to work for your attention. Gorgeous by birth, they intuitively recognized that developing a personality was just a waste of time. People flocked to them to bask in their beauty and behold their capricious reward of gold and glitter to the chosen few who garnered their individual attention with no more effort than the flick of a wrist and the spin of a few reels. No need for brains here; beauty rules! British machines were the girl next door. Common in appearance and impecunious in reward, they had to work harder to attract the attention of their target audience. Unable to rely upon the promise of unstated but implied treats, they appealed to the male population with a combination of charm, challenge and whimsy. Today's game, **Bomb Dropper** by Handan-Ni, is an excellent example.

Produced starting at the end of World War I in 1918, the makers capitalized on the war theme hardly before the soldiers had hung up their rucksacks and rifles. The game is simple. Upon deposit of the 1d large British penny, three steel balls are released to the holding position seen in **Photo B** on the following page. One at a time, the balls are released to shooting position and propelled onto the movable ledge at the top of the playfield, **Photo C**, by means of the large knob at the bottom of the door, right side. This ledge is a tilt surface, controlled by the small knob on the left side of the door. The ball rolls back and forth on the ledge until it is manually retracted by the player using the small knob on the right side of the door.

The object of the game is to drop the (cannon) ball onto the top of each of the three cannons, one at a time. If the drop is successful, the cannon barrel collapses down in a visible sign of defeat. If all three cannons are defeated during one round of play, the player is rewarded with the return of his penny. To receive your penny, you turn the "twister" looking knob on the upper right side of the door. This same knob also resets the cannons for the start of a new game. The play card, **Photo D** spells out the rules of engagement.

The game is visually attractive. This particular model sports the Showman's paint scheme common to machines that have ridden the fun fair circuit a few times too many. I would never consider altering one of these painted cabinets; the design only adds to the charm of the machine.



Photo B



Photo C

Not too many of this particular game have survived. Several reasons, I think. First, the play of three balls makes the game slow as compared to the allwins that were beginning to gain traction around the same time. With their vertical track and single ball action, allwins were faster and more exciting. With the Bomb Dropper's tilt tray ledge, one could spend minutes rolling the balls back and forth waiting for the exact moment to drop the bomb on the unsuspecting cannon below. This might be fun for the players but I doubt the operators enjoyed the long play quite as much. Plus, three balls with Bomb Dropper versus a single ball allwin guarantees a longer play. Faster play translates into faster accumulation of money in the operator's box.

The second problem is the game design. If you miss with the first cannon ball, you've lost the game. Two subsequent cannons down is still a loser. Hope can be extinguished early which is never a good feature. Did Kim Kardashian dump Kris Humphries down BEFORE the marriage? I think not, Binkie. Just like real life, the best game design keeps you hoping right up until the bitter end.

Any game that involves guns, war or sex is guaranteed to appeal to a male audience. Bomb Dropper has two out of three going for it. Had the game been developed for today's market, you can be sure that the Kardashians would be on the playfield. "**Boob Dropper?**" Now that's a winning idea!

John Peterson, USA

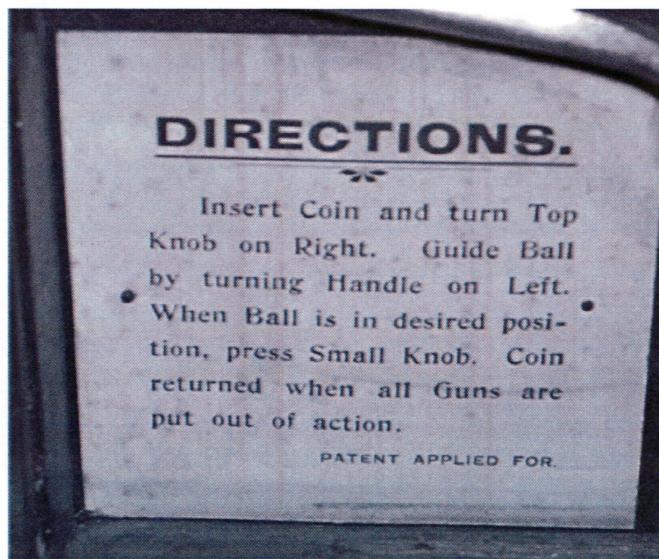


Photo D

Coventry 2011 Preview

Now, I know I say this every year, but this one you really must not miss. This year we have a staggering diversity of machines, which I am sure will make it our best event ever (and I probably say that every year too)!

So, where to start? Let's start with bandits. You may remember the year before last, we probably set a record with the number of bandits on offer, at over forty. Well, this year we've come pretty close with about thirty-three, including Aristocrat, Bally, Jennings, Jubilee, Mills, Sega, Pace etc., plus a number of German wall bandits. Most of the machines are 'lower end' which seem to be more popular these days, with the higher end bandits sadly not attracting the interest that they ought. However, we do have a couple of surprises this year, including a very rare Mills Egyptian Front.

So now on to allwins. The allwin count is probably a little low this time, but what we lack in numbers, we certainly make up for in diversity, covering all eras from the early 1900s to the 1960s. Of particular interest are two rare Oliver Whales machines: a WWII Defiant and a nice 3-ball Reserve, which I suspect was originally a Saxony



Jubilee Riviera

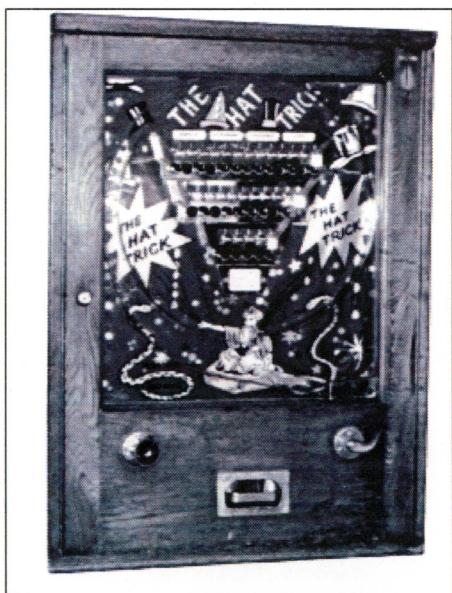


Sega Bell Hi-Top

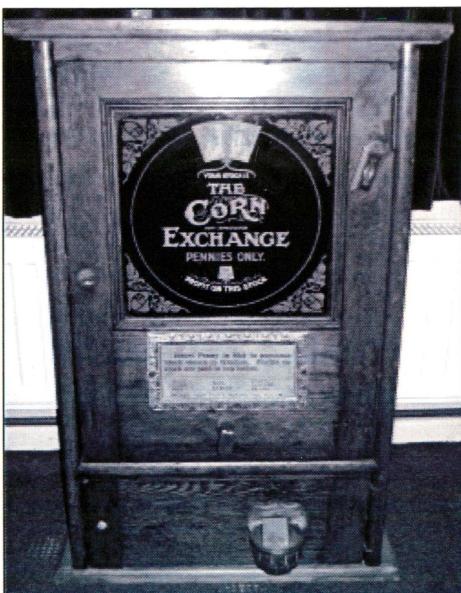
machine that has been re-cased (in the art-deco style) – at least one other Whales allwin is known to exist in a similar case. Other allwins include: Shefras Cracker Jack and Time Limit; a c.1900 Reserve ball, thought to be unique; R&W Hat Trick, Earth Satellite and Fill em Up; several Whales and Wonders machines, plus others by Hawtins, BMC Co, Parkers, etc.

It is perhaps in the category of ‘other wall machines’ that we see the highest diversity this year, especially in terms of age and rarity. Some of the machines on offer which most collectors will be familiar with include: Essex Corn Exchange; Bell Fruit Cascade; Oliver Whales Kiss-O-Meter; Bradley Challenger, plus a number of rarer ‘Beromat’ type German wall bandits, including a rare ‘Space Flight’ (one of which sold in America recently for something in the order of £1000)! Bryans machines are a bit thin on the ground this year, but we do have a Clock, Bullion, Worl Borl and one of the stars of the show: a Trickler! Yes, for the first time in many years, a Trickler has come to auction, so don’t miss this opportunity – it could be many years again before another comes up. Electro-mechanicals are once again well represented, with some particularly rare and interesting machines on offer – two to look out for are ‘Steeple Chasers’ and ‘Finalex’.

There are a number of early and extremely rare wall machines on offer, most of which many (particularly newer) collectors will never have seen before, and will probably never see again. These include a really nice c.1916 Automatic Novelty Co.



R&W Hat Trick

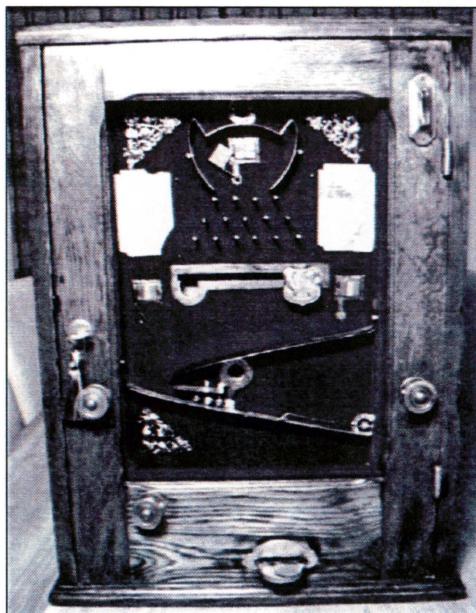


Essex Corn Exchange

'Victory Flag' and an extremely rare 'Sport' allwin, being the only one known of its type. Among the rarest of machines ever to come to auction are three c.1900 Price and Castell machines, which are thought to be unique – none others are known to exist. These three were once part of the Costa/Haskell collection, and will be offered as one lot, with a view of insuring they remain together. If they fail to sell as one complete lot, they will be offered individually.

Important English Wall Machines 1900 – 1920 The Brian Bates Collection

And finally, perhaps leaving the best till last, completing the line-up of early and rare machines on offer this year, we're pleased to include a collection of eight early wall machines, being the last of the significant collection of Mr Brian Bates, who probably won't be known to many of today's collectors. Brian started his collection in the late 1970s and right from the beginning concentrated his efforts on finding and restoring 'antique' wall machines. At one time he built up a collection of close to forty, involving a large variety of styles, shapes and sizes. However, he gradually sold off pieces one by one and these auction bound machines represent the remaining few.



Automatic Novelty Co. 'Victory Flag'



Price & Castell 'Game of Skill'

Brian explained to me that he is now approaching 74 years of age and because the house will probably be sold next year allowing him to downsize, he needs to do a bit of offloading of the machines and other irrelevant items that one hoards, sometimes unnecessarily. Regrettably, neither of his grown up children have any interest in this rather unique hobby.

As the machines were acquired over the years, Brian's main concern was to restore them to working order. Many needed only minor attention, whereas others required a complete overhaul to cabinet and mechanics alike, which is where (as with most collectors), the real satisfaction was derived. Many of the machines bought and sold over the years were manufactured in France, mainly by the well known company Bussoz, who were originally clock makers but made a considerable number of very attractive and well constructed wall type machines right through to the 1940s. One of their best known and most desirable being the 1910 'Paris Courses' which Brian owned for a number of years, eventually being sold to a French collector.



Fortuna, by Johef c.1901



Improved Pickwick, PMW&G c.1905

Included among the eight machines to be offered in the auction are: Fortuna by Johef, c.1901; Improved Pickwick by Pessers, Moody, Wraith & Gurr, c.1905; Pickwick By Henry Klein, c. 1900; Electra Allwin, with electric shock, c.1910 and a Horoscope fortune teller by Argyle Automatic Co., c.1912. All the machines were manufactured by English companies, many of whom will be unfamiliar to some of today's collectors. However, references to these early 20th century companies and others can be found in Nic Costa's book *Automatic Pleasures* or the well illustrated 1997 catalogue entitled the *Costa-Haskell Collection*.

So there we are, Coventry 2011, which should prove to be our best auction ever. In addition to a fantastic selection of machines, there will also be the usual spares, books, paperwork and bits & bobs, making a great day out for us all. I intend posting all the pictures supplied by vendors online. Time permitting, I hope to set up a dedicated website, primarily for the magazine, which will probably be:

www.mechanicalmemoriesmagazine.co.uk

However, it is very dependant on time. One way or another though, pictures will be posted online – somewhere. Keep an eye on the pennymachines site for updates.



Electra allwin shocker, c.1910



Argyle Horoscope fortune teller, c. 1912

Derby Day

By Robert Rowland

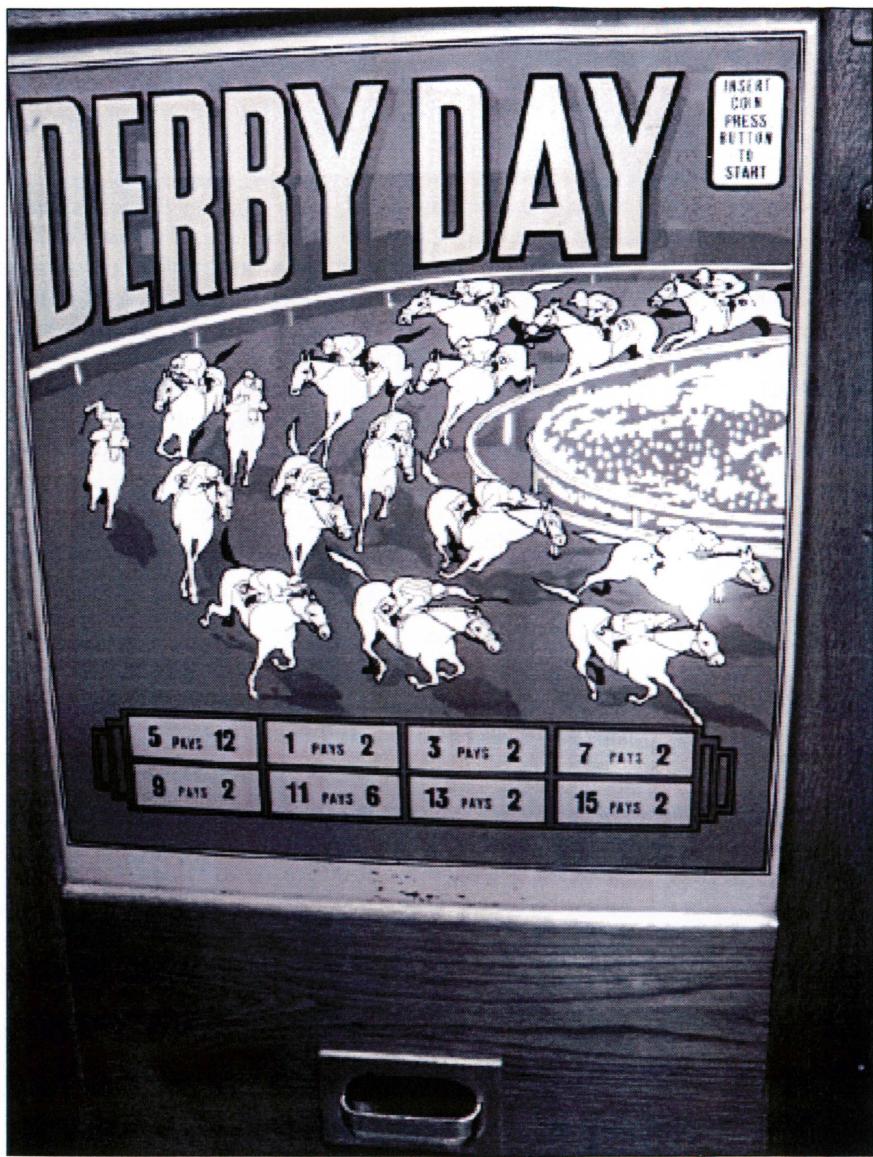
Some regular readers may remember my long search for a 1960s electro-mechanical wall machine called **Derby Day**. This search included a regular monthly wanted ad. in this magazine as well as various wild goose chases around the UK (see my original article in MMM, Issue 34 April 2009). Luckily, I eventually found a Derby Day and I thought that a closer look at this 1960s machine would make an interesting story.

It all started in the summer of 1965, my first year living in Mablethorpe, aged ten. There were six amusement arcades in the main high street: *The Empire, Bingoland, Queens Arcade, Funland, Jacksons Radio and Marine Pastimes*. And I was allowed in them all. I first came across a Derby Day in the Empire, which was the only arcade in town to have one. The red and white printed artwork on the front glass depicts horses racing round Tattenham Corner at Epsom on derby day. The horses are numbered 1 – 16, with the words ‘Derby Day’ above the horses in large yellow lettering.

The winning horses were 1, 3, 7, 9, 13, 15 all paying 2d, 11 paying 6d and the one you really wanted, horse 5 paying 12d. The even numbered horses were all losers, so simply any odd number was a winner and any even number was a loser. To play Derby Day, you would insert your penny in the slot and press the small button just below the coin entry. All the lights would flash and three seconds later one numbered horse would remain. If it was a winner, the machine would pay out accordingly.

As the days went by, I began to notice that a certain sequence of numbers led up to the ‘bob’ horse coming in. So I wrote this set of numbers in a notebook, which went 6, 8, 14, 4, 12, bob (that’s horse 5, the jackpot 12d win). Then every day, I started to watch the machine and write down the number of the winning horse on each play. Eventually, the numbers started to match up and I ended up with a notebook of various small but reliable sequences. Despite having this information, I only really used to look out for the approaching horse 5. The bob was well worth winning – it didn’t appear very often but it was a bib thrill at the time when it did, and the six rapid bangs of the payout solenoid sounded great.

Moving forward to today, as I now own a Derby Day, I decided to look closely at this machine. The left-hand uniselector which selects the winner has fifty positions and simply moves one position on each play, with horse 5 only coming up once in every fifty plays. The longest losing run before a winning horse is achieved would be five coins. A full cycle of the uniselector will result in Derby Day taking in fifty coins and paying out thirty-six coins. This was definitely a generous machine.



Beyond doubt, there is a system on this machine. Looking back, had I really pursued this back in the 1960s, it's probable that I could have worked-out the complete sequence, it was really that simple. But in order to have done this, I would have had to put in fifty pennies, and getting only six pennies a day spending money meant this was just not possible. The Empire was one of the arcades that wasn't always very busy, so even watching punters from a distance playing that machine was not viable. I would have been noticed by the cashier or attendants, and this would have resulted in me being thrown out long before fifty plays had come round. They also weren't keen on pencils and notebooks!

Most nights in the summer of 1965, a friend and I would make our way up to one of the local caravan sites, to play in the Golden Sands penny arcade. Up there, our faces were not known by the attendants, unlike the arcades in town, where we were on most of the attendants' wanted lists. Three or four steps in the place, and it was "out, out, out." We did sneak in sometimes though, without getting noticed. Anyway, on our way to the caravan site, we had to pass an arcade called Silver Dollar. It was not a busy place, but this arcade housed a very similar machine to Derby Day, called **Indianapolis**. Instead of horses, the machine displayed sixteen numbered motor-racing cars all lined up on the starting grid, with a green for go starting light displayed on a high bridge up above. The payouts on this machine were identical to Derby Day, and I also knew when the 'bob' car was due, as the two machines worked on exactly the same principle (must have been the same maker).

I only ever saw one Indianapolis wall machine, and I have never seen or heard of one since. It would be great if any of you can remember seeing or playing on such a machine, or perhaps even own one now. Do please let Jerry know, so that he can relay the information on to me.

Well, I do hope you've enjoyed my little bit of 1960s nostalgia.

Robert Rowland

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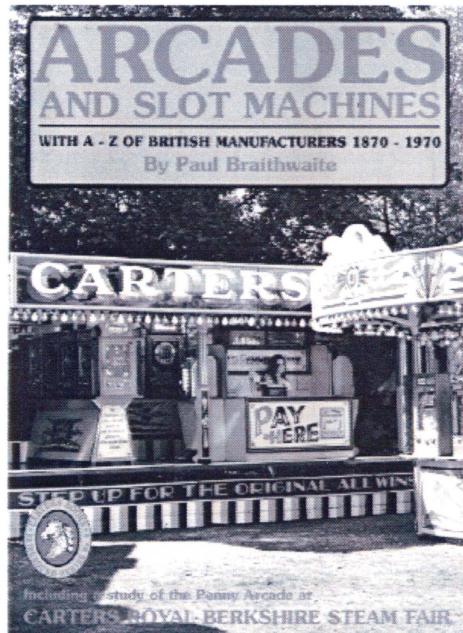
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